

**SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 4, 2003
Best Western, Wetmore**

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee was called to order at 9:13 a.m. by Chairperson Bill Manson in Wetmore, Michigan.

Members present at the meeting, representing:

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Grand Rapids
James Duke, Region I, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Munising
Elza Inman, Grant Sponsor, Brethren
Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association
Orville Olson, At-Large, Ludington
Paul R. Argall, Business Community, Ishpeming
Dan Moore, DNR, Newberry, Ex-Officio
Sgt Creig Grey, DNR-Law, Lansing, Ex-Officio
Randy Charles, Forest Service, USDA, Ottawa National Forest, Ex-Officio
Anne Okonek, Forest Service, USDA, Hiawatha National Forest, Ex-Officio

Members absent:

Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins

Staff Present:

James Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, FMFM, Lansing
Ron Yesney, W.U.P. Recreation Specialist
Don Klingler, Gaylord Management Unit 50

Others Present:

Robert Sweet, Indian River Groomers
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bud Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Don Britton, Hiawatha Trails
Mary A. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails
William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails
Jim Kostin, Jordan Valley Trails
Mary A. Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Chris Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Michael Sabo, Superior Snowmobile Club
Ken Scott, MSA
Gail Scott, Gogebic Area Grooming
Bruce L. Wood, Jordan Valley Trails
Loren Purvis, Charlevoix Snowmobile Club
Gavin M. Carnege, Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce
Mike Rankin, Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce
Tom Meyers, President, MSA
Martin Cottle, Soo Snowmobile Association
Don Grimm, SW Michigan Snowstompers Snow Club
Rick Brown, Vice-President, MSA
Allen Cottle, Soo Snowmobile Association
Dale Israels, MSA Secretary

I. MINUTES

- A. Acknowledge minutes of September 30, 2003 Advisory Committee Meeting.

Mr. Duke made a motion, supported by Mr. Inman to accept the September 30, 2003 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Added the following items to the agenda:

Old Business: Nothing added

New Business: E. Signing Issues; F. Paving Project; G. Event Permit; H. Holiday Grooming.

Prior to beginning, Bill Manson welcomed Ron Yesney, West UP Recreation Specialist, Marquette, to the meeting.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. **04 Base Grant Status**

Bill reported that as of 11/14/03, twenty-six of sixty-four sponsors had executed grants. Dan passed out a list of sponsors who had received or been sent a fully executed grant. Dan also stated that some sponsors had not returned their signed agreement.

B. **Gaylord-Cheboygan Connector**

Mr. Manson began with background information. He stated he was hopeful that the alternative trail may become a reality, and that it may even include a portion along Interstate 75. Discussions with MDOT are progressing well. Three more meetings in December to finalize recommendations to Mindy Koch. Question: Is the trail parallel to I-75 at Grayling still on Interstate right-of-way or was a strip sold off to another entity?

Dan stated that he believes this must have been sold off because we had the same issue at St Ignace (Chain Lake project). In this instance MDOT sold a narrow strip of land to the City of St. Ignace to complete this project.

Bill also stated that nothing will be on line by this season.

C. **Litigation Case Update**

Dan reported that the lawsuit that was thrown out of court, regarding Lake Gogebic Area Chamber of Commerce, has been appealed.

D. **KRC Miller Update**

Dan stated that the purchase of this miller drag is a dead issue as of October 1. However, things have happened over the past week to change this.

Jim Radabaugh reported on the background and history of this issue.

Dan stated that this equipment made it through all the approvals last fiscal year, but it was held up by the State Administrative Board. He received a call from Sharon Schafer asking about this issue. It appeared that the Department was going to push to get this approved by the Board.

E. **Finance Sub-Committee Update**

Elza Inman stated first that he wanted to dispel the rumors that due to the State budget situation, there would be reduced grooming of the trails. This is totally false. There is absolutely no truth to this. By January, we will have new

equipment funding limits. This would be applicable to all equipment purchased after the end of this grooming season.

Dan clarified this regarding the current grants issued. If a sponsor's normal grooming effort is only ten or thirteen weeks, that is what is put into their grant. However, if their grooming runs over this, additional funding will be added. No one will run out of grooming dollars.

Bill clarified a report on attempts to take restricted funds to balance the State budget woes.

F. Long Range Planning Committee Update

Orville Olson reported on part of the history of this sub-committee. Got a facilitator and held one meeting at the Groomer Workshop in Watersmeet. There was a lot of information generated at this workshop. After that a lot of people retired, people changed jobs, and things stalled. Now in the process of meeting with sponsors and councils and gathering information and ideas for improving the program.

G. PROGRAM UPDATES

Recreation Specialist Updates

Todd Neiss, NW Lower Peninsula, Cadillac

Robin Pearson, NE Lower Peninsula, Gaylord

Due to travel restrictions, Todd and Robin were unable to attend. Dan provided a report from the Northern Lower Peninsula.

TRAIL PROPOSALS:

New Bellaire Snowmobile Connector Trail, Antrim County – Power line alternative trail route did not pan out because one landowner was unwilling to give permission to cross their land. DNR staff will compile all alternatives considered, the pros and cons, the impacts and/or concerns of each, and forward on to Supervisor level since consensus for support could not be reached at Field level due to Fisheries, Natural Rivers and Wildlife concerns with the original proposed route and no alternative route found.

Alpena Connector, Alpena County – Proposal is in Lansing for final decision.

Perry Road/Southwest of Wolverine – All seasonal county roads proposed for new connector to Wolverine to remove off busy city roads, and will provide new extra grooming miles to Alpine Snowmobile Club. There were no Fisheries or Natural Rivers Program concerns. The concerns expressed by Wildlife were that the proposed trail will go through known Elk habitat and near an active Eagle's nest. This concern will be resolved by Wildlife staff and Forest, Mineral and Fire Management staff monitoring the snowmobile use, volume and impacts to the Elk in the area over a two year period.

ACQUISITIONS:

Mesick to Yuma, (Wexford County) – I received a call from DNR Field staff requesting the status of DNR interest in this stretch of inactive railroad corridor, so Cadillac Snowmobile Club could determine if they could groom this stretch for a designated trail again this upcoming season. Roger Storm, Railroad Grade Acquisition Specialist said DNR doesn't own it yet and doesn't have a lease on this stretch, but that DNR staff was meeting the next day to discuss the possibility of leasing this stretch. Bill Homrich of MDOT stated MDOT still owned it, and that the snowmobile club should submit a written request again this year to MDOT to request permission to maintain the railroad grade as a snowmobile trail. I instructed DNR Field staff to have the club write a request to the same MDOT contact they used last year to ask for the same conditions.

REQUESTS, INQUIRIES, ETC:

Railings for Bridge #907, Clare County - Club is waiting for an amended grant per Dan Moore before they can have a contractor start work.

MDOT Right-of-Way Problems, Alpena County – Signs were placed to the satisfaction of MDOT, the club and the DNR at 30' from the white line on the highway edge, which is on the long end of the requirements at no more than 25' from the intended stopping point, but all signs are up and problem is resolved.

Snowmobile Sign Vandalism – I received word of a significant sign vandalism episode in Alpena County and also on the west side of the state in the month of November. Sign vandalism is widespread, but some episodes are particularly serious. Lewiston, I believe, lost a couple of miles of signs only 2 ½ hours after placement. Jordan Valley Snowmobile Club lost 30 signs and posts on the East side of the Blue Bear trail near the DeWard Tract, and about 15 signs on the "Alpine Connector" trail. Jim Kostin of Jordan Valley plans to submit an article to local newspaper offices to pass the word on how serious the problem is, and what repercussions violators may face. He will be speaking with DNR Conservation Officer Jim Gorno, and DNR Field Contact Dan Jones, before writing and sending the article so he can collect facts on what penalties can and cannot occur. Other clubs, or SAC members may wish to follow the same procedure to pass the word of this widespread, unsafe and costly problem.

Dan Moore, Recreation Specialist, Eastern Upper Peninsula

Red Creek Bridge – Construction has begun on this bridge over I-75 just north of the M-134 Interchange. Once completed, this will move all snowmobile traffic off of the M-134 Bridge. Completion date is mid-summer of 2004.

Wilder Property – This property consists of four, forty acre parcels (one large square) which, if purchased or a permanent easement was purchased, would go a long way to getting the snowmobile trail off and away from M-123. Working with Snow Country By-Ways on this project.

O'Brien Creek Project – This project is along M-123 in Paradise and creates a snowmobile lane off M-123, to allow snowmobiles to reach several businesses toward the south end of Paradise without running on M-123.

Ronald Yesney, Recreation Specialist, Western Upper Peninsula

Trail Information:

Chocolay Township Trail – The much debated trail through Chocolay Township is now open. Hiawatha Trails will be doing the grooming. We are working to ensure that the trail is adequately patrolled and that residents have a direct outlet for their complaints and concerns. Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau funded two new signs at each end of the trail segment through the residential area, the signs read -

- Between Midnight and 6 a.m., the Law requires using a Speed no Greater than the Minimum to Maintain Forward Movement Within 100' of Dwellings. At all other Times, Please use a **Conservative** Speed
- Stay on the Trail
- Avoid Rapid Acceleration and Revving your Engine
- Come to a Complete Stop at all Trail Crossings
- Watch for Children and Pedestrians

This trail serves as an important east-west connector for the U.P. trail system. There will be an entrance point along the trail for business access – the business access is not ideal and is something we will continue to work to improve. The Department is sending letters and fact sheets to all Chocolay residents regarding the trail. We need the cooperation of the Snowmobilers to make this trail a

success. Help us get the word out about the need for especially conservative riding along this eight mile section of trail.

Railroad Crossing in Negaunee— A railroad crossing in Negaunee Township has yet to be approved by Canadian National and continues to be a trouble spot in our trail system. Steps are being taken to resolve this issue before the snow flies.

Bridge Vandalism— We have received and substantiated reports of vandalism on a rail-trail bridge in West Ishpeming. We have not caught the vandal but we are investigating. Please be on the lookout for this type of behavior and report any incident that you become aware of to the DNR.

Acquisitions:

Keweenaw Point Land — The Department has recently taken ownership of an 8,387 acre tract near the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The tract includes nine miles of Lake Superior Shoreline, several inland lakes and Manitou Island. A Citizen Advisory Committee is being formed to analyze this 8,387 acre tract. The Advisory Committee will make land management recommendations to the Department. The Advisory Committee has a person (Don Kaupi) on board representing the interests of Snowmobilers. The tract currently includes two groomed snowmobile trails and several other unofficial trails.

Chassell to Houghton Grade — A Citizen Advisory Committee is being formed to discuss and make recommendations regarding future usage of this newly acquired trail. There is substantial resistance to motorized usage of this trail. Resistance to motorized vehicles is coming mostly from local property owners. The Citizen Advisory Committee does have an MSA delegate (Richard Krupp) appointed to represent snowmobile interests on this trail.

Forest Service Update

Randy Charles, Ottawa National Forest

Issues with Baldwin District from last meeting. Specifically, issues with Lakeshore Snowmobile Club and Trail Riders Snowmobile Club. Huron-Manistee National Forest now has funding to do EA for the Lakeshore snowmobile trail development proposal.

Working on finishing an EA on trail in the Western U.P. for Superior Snowmobile Club.

Reported on Regional Forester's award for the Snow Country By-Ways Project. MSA, DNR and Ottawa National Forest folk will be receiving an award for this project.

Ann Okonek, Hiawatha National Forest

Fencing added to Dody bridge. Trespass issue; trailers set up on trail 8 near Dukes.

Delta County working on trail reconstruction work; new staging area in northern Delta County.

New Recreation (trail) Coordinator in St. Ignace, Paula Johnston.

Question about re-routing a portion of trail 8 by AuTrain River. Ann responded that Dick Anderson had mentioned this and it was a work in progress.

Law Enforcement Update

Sgt. Creig Grey, Law Enforcement, Lansing

Reinforced Dan's comment about Maureen Houghton's duties and the massive amount that she is responsible for.

December 5 -19, 40 hour LE class. Pretty good number of participants already signed up.

Looking at an August hiring date for additional Conservation Officers.

Looking at getting up to nine snowmobiles to replace old machines with a lot of mileage on them.

Reported on 2002-03 Snowmobile season fatal accident report. Passed out copies of final fatality report and discussed some major points of the report. Had a PowerPoint presentation regarding the report, but the meeting room was not conducive to the presentation. Agreed to make the presentation at the January 27 meeting at BJ's in Gaylord.

General discussion of accident statistics and fatalities in general.

Creig asked what, if any, information would the Committee like to see added to this type of report, or to the posted weekly report. Another question asked about patrol hours from County Sheriffs and other Police agencies. Is there any way to add this information to this report?

Bill asked about concerns he had with who could take the new 40 hour law enforcement course. Law doesn't say who has to provide training. But the law only allows a person deputized by a County Sheriff to take this training. Concerns expressed about the City, Township or other Police agencies not being able to take advantage of this new language in the law.

County Sheriff

Sheriff Johnson could not attend this meeting, therefore there was no report.

State Trails Coordinator Update

Jim Radabaugh

List of snowmobile enforcement grants to SAC. Total issued: \$742,000. Four grant applications were denied. Non-snow counties. HB 5027. Want to drop "trail" from all references to "trail permit".

Discussed other aspects of HB 5027, amendments to Law Enforcement sections of snowmobile part.

Operating under several Executive Orders that severely limit our purchasing and travel opportunities.

Section transferred back to FMFM came with only three persons, from twelve. Rather than have programs managed by one person, going to split programs by business functions. Plan to share program knowledge so we don't lose the program management information when someone (like Dan) leaves a program. Introduced Richard Kennedy as the person who will be responsible for trail program operation and maintenance, and grant coordination.

Steve Kubisiak will be responsible for policy and procedures, and for Advisory group coordination/contact.

Jim also mentioned the third position, currently vacant, that would be for trail planning, acquisition and OLAF interface.

Trail corridor acquisition. Source of funding has always been Trust Fund. Either line item appropriation or lump sum funding. Applications now in to Trust Fund Board; decisions to be made next week. Issues with PILT may result in few Trust Fund acquisitions for State lands.

H. PUBLIC APPEARANCE

- A. **Bud Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club.** Concerns about Committee softening on GCCS. Commented about demands put on clubs. Also concerned about changes in grants that are not explained, so the club's sitting there wondering what they are missing or what got cut.

- B. **Bob Sweet, Indian River Groomers.** New sponsor, didn't get a sign order last year. Got more than enough signs for this year. Will contact Don Klingler at Gaylord and let him know what extras he has.
- C. **Jim Kostin, Jordan Valley Trails Council.** More on sign issues.
- D. **Bob Stein, Munising Visitors Bureau.** Concerns with signing to high speeds. Also with stop signs on, and adjacent to County Road.
- E. **Bruce Wood, Jordan Valley Trails Council.** Told that all "yellow backed signs" must be taken down.

Dan responded that this was absolutely not true. The only signs that all FMFM Field Contact Persons were told to remove completely were signs that did not meet the current size requirements; all old masonite (beaded reflectivity) signs; all stop ahead signs that were either all red or all black.
- F. **Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club.** More sign concerns.
- E. **Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association.** Problems with reflective sheeting peeling.

II. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **International Paper Liability Insurance Issue**
Dan reported that one of the IP Managers is requiring unattainable liability insurance requirements. He is also working with Managers in other regions to make sure these requirements are expanded to other areas as well as the Keweenaw-Ironwood areas.

Richard Krupp expanded on this issue.
- B. **03 Equipment and Maintenance Funding**
Dan mentioned the initial carry forward, and then loss, of 03 unencumbered snowmobile funds. He went on to say that these funds were then restored.
- C. **04 Meeting Dates**
January 27; April 13; June 22; August 10; September 28; and December 2.
- D. **Signing Issues**
Dan reported on massive amounts of sign and post theft and/or destruction. Based on reports, this is getting totally out of hand. It's bad enough if we lose the value of the signs and posts, but we are also losing the many hours of work the club volunteers are putting in signing their trails. He went on to say that we need to increase the penalties for the theft or destruction of snowmobile trail signs.

Sgt. Grey suggested an information and education campaign, like they do with their hunter safety classes.

Mr. Manson expanded this to even suggest that this be extended to include clubs and organizations in Southeast Michigan.

E. **Paving Project**

Bill reported on status of paving test on the Pere Marquette State Trail. Section between Evart and Hersey. Several different asphalt mixes applied to the trail. Quarterly reports on use and wear will be submitted to the department.

F. **Event Permit**

Bill brought up the issue of a letter sent to Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association regarding an event permit for their planned poker run. Voiced strong objections to requiring any sponsor to pay for a permit to use the trails for which Snowmobilers have already paid registration fees and trail permit fees.

G. **Holiday Grooming**

Concerns with furlough days and holiday time off; are our trails going to be groomed?

Jim reported that the units are working to develop a plan to make sure all FMFM trails are covered over the holidays.

III. **PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

A. **Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** – Brought up issue of funding trail brushing equipment. Need to do something sooner, rather than later.

B. **Jim Kostin, Jordan Valley Trails Council** – Stated that funding a piece of brushing equipment for each sponsor is serious over-kill. He also stated this type of equipment is expensive and carries a high maintenance cost. Due to this high cost, sharing equipment between several sponsors would be very detrimental to the equipment.

C. **Bob Sweet, Indian River Grooming** – Field Contact Person, (TJ) stated he is their Grant Originator. Collects all information from his sponsors.

Dan stated it sounds like TJ was only looking for the grant application package since he apparently did not get copies. As their contact person, he must have the application package and a copy of their actual agreement.

D. **Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association** – Asked about the 0.8% limit on the comp insurance.

Dan responded that the 0.8% should have been changed and wasn't. Further, no sponsor would be denied their comp insurance reimbursement as long as their premium and request were in line with other grant sponsors. In most cases, 0.9 to 1% are the current rates.

E. **Mary Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails** – Wanted to compliment the DNR on the new signs.

IV. **Next meeting: Tuesday, January 27, 2004, 9:00am at BJ's Restaurant, 990 N. Center Street, Gaylord.**

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.